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20

URARTIAN TEMPLES

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Although much information has been obtained concerning the plans of Urartian temples from excavations carried out at various sites, first at Toprakkale and then at other Urartian fortified citadels, recent excavations have revealed further, hitherto unknown details in connection with Urartian temples. This paper will mainly focus on the temples excavated within the boundaries of the Urartian kingdom and the new findings obtained from the excavations at Ayanis, which enable us to reconsider and evaluate the religion of Urartu along with the related architecture.

The architectural features of Urartian temples

The temples with square plans which have been excavated within Urartian sites are: those at Upper Anzaf and Aznavurtepe (built by Menua); the Irmushini (Fig. 20.01) and the upper citadel temples at Çavuştepe and the temple at Kayalıdere (built by Sarduri son of Argishti) (Fig. 20.02); Altıntepe (perhaps built by Argishti son of Rusa) (Figs. 20.03-04); Toprakkale (either built by Rusa son of Erimena or by Rusa son of Argishti: for discussion see Seidl 2007, this volume Chapter 12; Zimansky 2007); and Ayanis (Fig. 20.05) (built by Rusa son of Argishti). In addition to two temples restored with a rectangular plan at Arinberd, it is assumed that there might be other temples in Bastam, Karmir Blur, Körzüt Kale and even Kef Kale which have not been discovered archaeologically. The temples were built in places that could be best seen from outside the Urartian fortresses and it should be emphasized that they do not consist solely of a single square building. The Urartian temple was a construction complex that consisted of many sections which were used for different purposes. The complex generally included parts such as a courtyard surrounded by walls and separate from the other constructions of the fortress. The core temple has a square plan and is located in the middle or at the back of the courtyard.

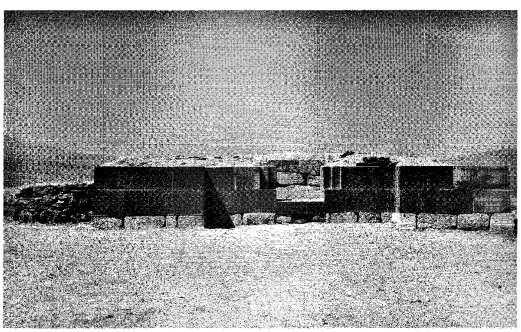


Fig. 20.01. Çavuştepe Irmushini temple.

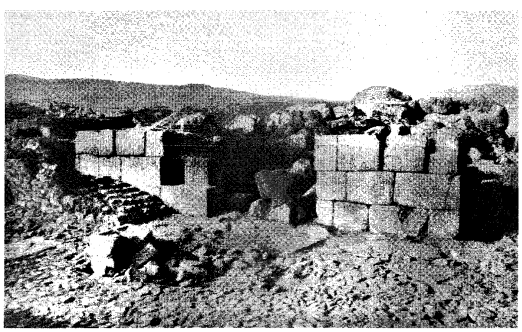
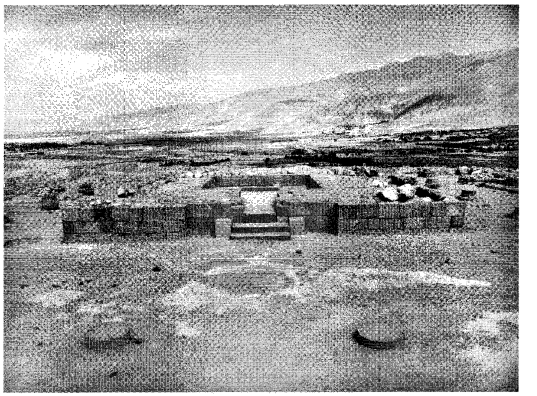


Fig. 20.02. Kayalıdere temple (Burney 1966: plate Vb).

[1] All illustrations unless otherwise stated are by Altan Çilingiroğlu.



Figs. 20.03-04. Altıntepe temple (New excavation) (Photo M. Karaosmanoğlu).

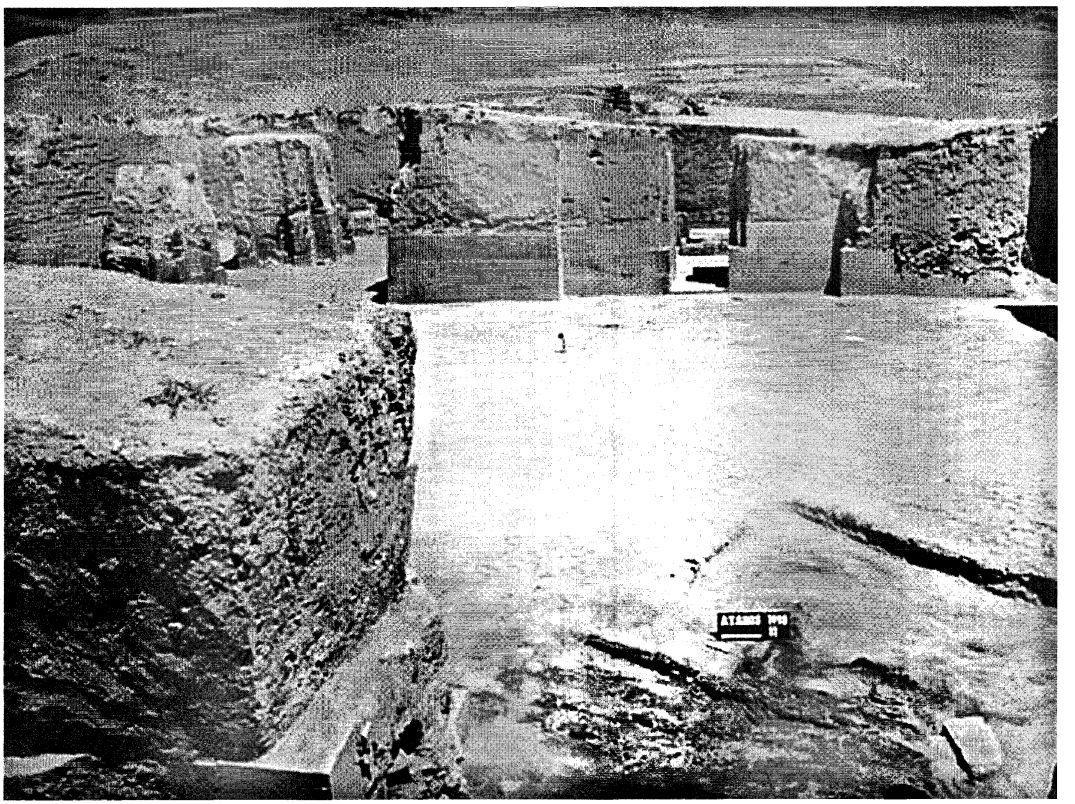


Fig. 20.05. Ayanis temple and courtyard.

Fig. 20.06. Stone foundation of Ayanis temple on bed rock.

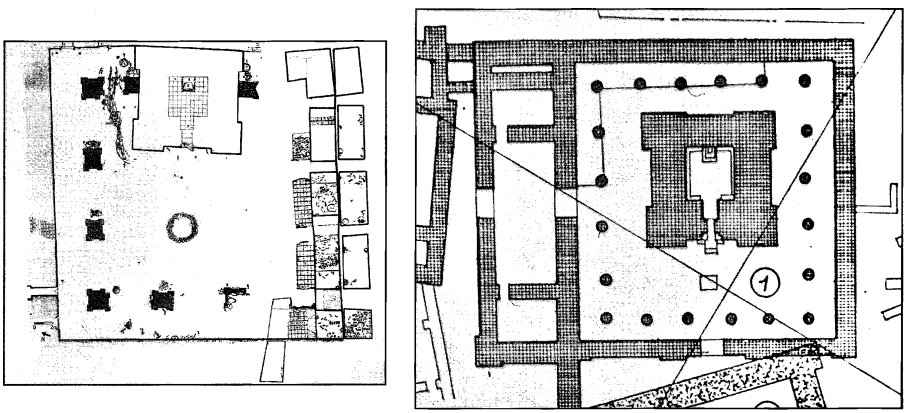


Fig. 20.07. Ayanis and Altıntepe: plans of the temple areas.

Rooms and depots for different purposes were built next to the courtyard or below the courtyard floor. The example of Ayanis demonstrates that the rooms surrounding the courtyard could be multi-storeyed. The constructions that constitute the temple complex are generally built on stone footings placed on bedrock (Fig. 20.06). While the stone walls of Kayalıdere, Toprakkale and Çavuştepe temples are on the bedrock surface, sometimes the lower parts of the walls of the core temple were carved out of the bedrock. The bedrock in Ayanis temple area is 2-3 m deeper than the temple courtyard level, so the visible walls of the temple were supported by strong below-ground foundations to that depth. The temple areas generally have a square plan. This area measures 27 × 27 m in Altıntepe and 30 × 30 m in the fortress of Ayanis (Fig. 20.07). Despite the fact that the dimensions in other fortresses are not certain, the courtyard of the Çavuştepe Irmushini temple

(Erzen 1978: 10) measures approximately 21.5 x 21.5 m and that of Kayalıdere (Burney 1966: 68–69) 23 x 23 m. Since the excavations in these settlements were not completed the exact dimensions of the temple area cannot be measured. Due to the mass destruction of the temples at Toprakkale, Aznavurtepe and Upper Anzaf (Belli 2001c: 171) fortresses the temple area was not measured. In all these temples, the places surrounding the core temple constituted the temple complex.

It has been well known for years that the standard Urartian core temple was a single-roomed square structure with buttresses, sometimes called risalits, at each corner. The core temples, including those at Upper Anzaf, Aznavurtepe, Kayalıdere, Çavuştepe (Irmushini and Haldi temples) and Ayanis, have recessed doorways sometimes approached by steps leading to a square cella via a corridor-like passage through the immensely thick walls. Although the dimensions of each core temple are different, their basic plans are identical. The dimensions of some Urartian temples are listed in Table 20.01.

	Temple complex	Core temple	Cella
Upper Anzaf	–	13.40 x 13.40	7.30 x 7.30 (?)
Aznavurtepe	–	13.63 x 13.63	5.03 x 5.03
Toprakkale	–	13.80 x 13.80	5.30 x 5.30
Altıntepe	27 x 27	13.90 x 13.90	5.20 x 5.20
Çavuştepe Irmushini	21.5 x 21.5	10.00 x 10.00	4.50 x 4.50
Çavuştepe Upper Citadel		12.50 x 12.50	4.50 x 4.50
Kayalıdere	23 x 23	12.50 x 12.50	5.0 x 5.0
Ayanis	30 x 30	12.75 x 13.00	4.58 x 4.62

Table 20.01. Dimensions in metres of some Urartian temples.

In the cellae of certain Urartian temples (Çilingiroğlu 2001b: 42; Özgüç 1966: 4) a podium was attached to the back wall. There is no agreed interpretation of the function of these platforms (Fig. 20.08-09). In addition to the suggestion that on the platform there was a throne on which stood an anthropomorphic statue of the god sculpture or a symbol representing the deity, it has also been suggested that the platform was used in religious ceremonies to receive the offerings to the gods (Tarhan & Sevin 1975: 390-400). There is no other 'furniture' in the cella apart from the podiums, which have square plans and quite small dimensions. In the example of Ayanis, the cella measures only 4.58 x 4.62 m. and there is not enough space for any other objects besides the podium. In Ayanis and other Urartian temples, spaces of 1.50 m in width are left on each side of the podium and this space is quite small for any ceremonies that might have taken place. In evaluating the suggestion that there had been a throne on the platform in the cella, it is crucial to take into consideration a few points. First of all, there are winged lion figures applied as incised decoration on the stone made of two alabaster blocks which cover the whole podium in Ayanis cella (Çilingiroğlu 2001b: 37-48). Placing a throne with metal foot on the decorated stone block would have left a mark. The cella in Ayanis was looted after a disaster in the fortress and the animal motifs made of gold leaf on the base of the podium were broken and taken away. But many works on the floor of the entrance way and in the courtyard were not looted. In fact the excavations have shown that most of the fortress was not affected by the despoliation probably because the entrance into the fortress was blocked by fallen mud-brick. The precious artefacts found in situ in the cella entrance corridor show that the robbers of the cella had not reached the cella by this means but rather through a space they made by pulling down part of the east wall of the temple. The broken stones of this wall were found near the east wall in the excavations. Mediaeval disturbances which are evident in the upper levels closer to the surface did not reach the temple walls. The gap that the looters made in the east wall is not big enough for a throne to pass through it in one piece, and, if it had existed, it would have had to have been disassembled. As we have argued in detail in another article (Çilingiroğlu 2008a), our conclusion is that the platform in the cella was not a pedestal on which the throne was placed but was a piece of furniture on which votive offerings were put.

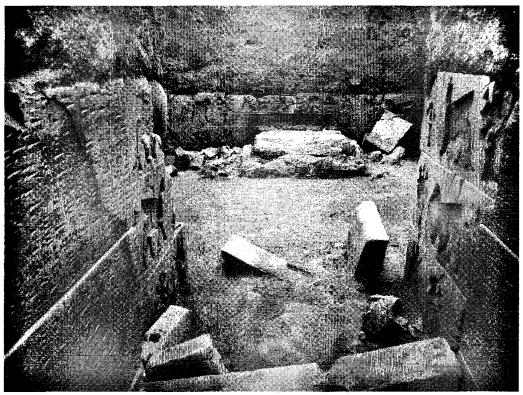


Fig. 20.08. Cella of Ayanis temple during the excavation.

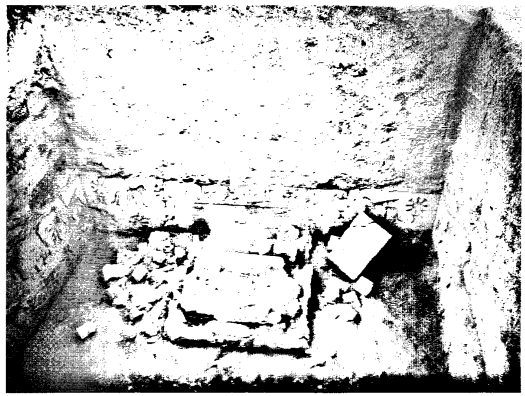


Fig. 20.09. Podium in the cella of Ayanis temple.

Fig. 20.10. Stone inlay decoration of Ayanis cella.

Different types of decoration, wall paintings at Altıntepe (Özgüç 1966: 33-36), plaster at Çavuştepe, and stone inlays at Ayanis (Fig. 20.10) (Çilingiroğlu 2001b: 43) were applied to the walls of those cellae where a podium was found attached to the back wall. The andesite stone blocks of the walls of the Ayanis cella were decorated by engraving motifs of fantastic creatures, gods, and rosettes.[2] The floors of the cellae are covered

[2] For further information see Çilingiroğlu 2001b: 37-48.

with different materials in different temples. While the floor in Altıntepe was made of beaten clay (Özgüç 1966: 43), in Çavuştepe the bedrock was smoothed and used as the floor. The Kayalıdere cella had a floor surface consisting of bedrock and small stones (Burney 1966: 70). The floor of the Ayanis cella was different from all the other Urartian temples, being covered with alabaster blocks. There are 90 alabaster blocks on the cella floor, each measuring 0.48 × 0.52 m.

The lower parts of the walls of the cellae were normally made of limestone or andesite stone blocks, with a mud-brick superstructure. The mud-brick walls were plastered and painted. In the Ayanis cella, decorative bronze bands, which measure 0.18m in width, were set into the mud-brick walls. There are similar-looking bands on the exterior walls of the Haldi Temple in Musasir, depicted in Sargon's Palace in Dur-Sharrukin (Fig. 20.11) (Botta 1849-1850: pl. 141; Albenda 1986: pl. 133).

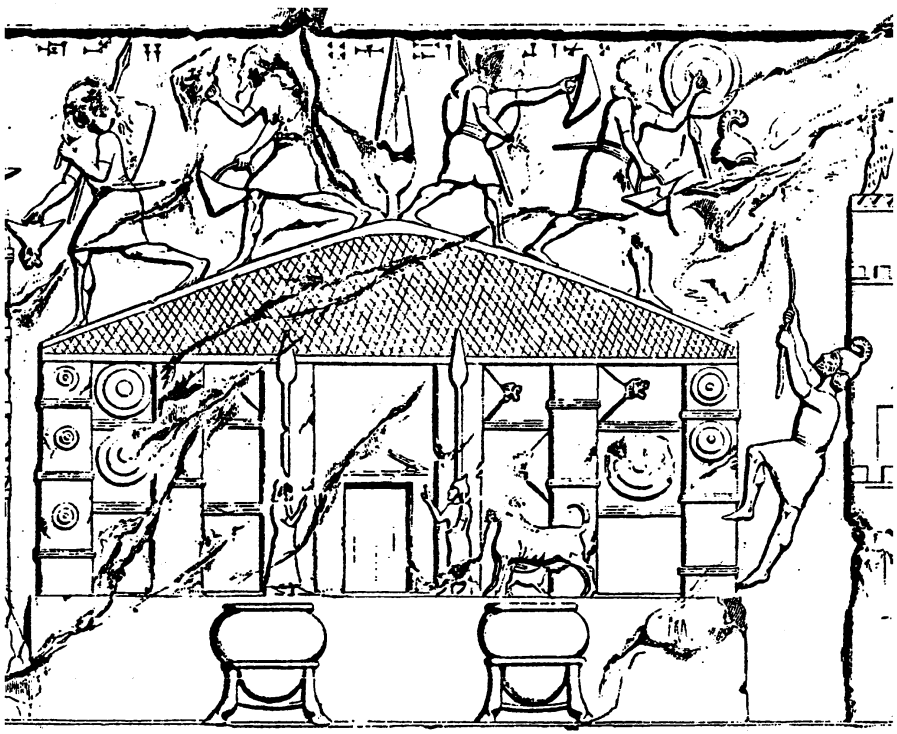


Fig. 20.11. The Temple of Haldi at Musasir (Botta 1849-1850: pl. 141).

The architectural characteristics of the Urartian temple including its reconstruction, cultural connections with other regions, and origin have often been discussed in the past. It has been proposed that the Altıntepe temple cella was not roofed and that there were towers built at the four corners (Özgüç 1966: 4, fig. 1). Since the floor of the cella was made of beaten clay, it is impossible for it to have been open to the sky. In the view of the fact that only the stone footings of the Çavuştepe, Upper Anzaf, and Altıntepe temples have survived to our day, we do not have enough information about the decoration and upper construction of those temples. The limited information about Urartian temples led archaeologists to make comparisons with similar constructions in neighbouring cultures or with ancient depictions such as the Khorsabad relief showing the Haldi Temple in Musasir (see Fig. 20.11). It is claimed that the Musasir temple was not an Urartian temple and as a result, the

reconstruction of Urartian temple cannot be made by making connections with Musasir (Kleiss 1963-1964). Another influential suggestion inspired by similarities between the ground plans of tower temples of Achaemenian period and those of Urartian temples, is that Urartian temples were also 'tower temples' and reached a height of as much as 26 m (Stronach 1967: 278-288). These suggestions, however, have had to be changed as the information about Ayanis temple was revealed (Stronach this volume Chapter 21).

In the past, the proposal that the Musasir temple was not a Urartian temple of the type we have been discussing was based on the following grounds (Kleiss 1963-1964):

- The temple shown in the relief is wider than it is high: it is uncertain whether this could have been because the artist was unable to create an accurately proportioned image or because he altered his representation to fit into the available space on the relief.
- There are no steps in the front of the temple leading to the cella corridor and the temple stands on a platform: such platforms have not been found in the excavation of Urartian temples.
- In addition to the corner buttresses there are two more buttresses and these have not been seen on any excavated temple.
- In Urartu before the excavation of Ayanis, no example of a shield with a lion head like those shown in the relief and described in the account of Sargon's Eighth Campaign had been found.

Fig. 20.12. Facade and inscriptions of the Ayanis temple.

The suggestions presented above are refuted by the data from the temple in the fortress of Ayanis and do not rule out a close similarity between Musasir and Urartian temples. There are no steps in the cella entrance at Ayanis and the floor of the courtyard is only 0.15 m below the threshold made of alabaster (Fig. 20.12). The same situation prevails with the Çavuştepe temple as well (Fig. 20.01). In the Çavuştepe temple of Irmushini

the entrance to the cella corridor is through the courtyard covered with stones without any steps. The Toprakkale temple was built on a platform constructed on the bedrock. While this can be observed today, it can also be understood from the older plans of the temple (Loon 1966: fig. 7). Piers that were attached to the wall were found on both the north and south sides of the Ayanis temple (Fig. 20.13). Urartian builders, when necessary, did not always follow the general rules and were free to use alternative the architectural elements. The piers in Musasir temple, in front of which Urartian soldiers were keeping guard, can be compared with the similar ones unearthed in the temple courtyard at Ayanis. The shields shown hanging on the buttresses or piers of the Musasir temple have lion heads and an example of such a shield was found fallen from the north wall of Ayanis temple (Fig. 20.14 and Colour plate IVc). Many examples of shields that had been hanging on the piers (Figs. 20.13 and 20.15) were found in the Ayanis temple area (Çilingiroğlu 2001b: 45; Derin & Çilingiroğlu 2001: 163).

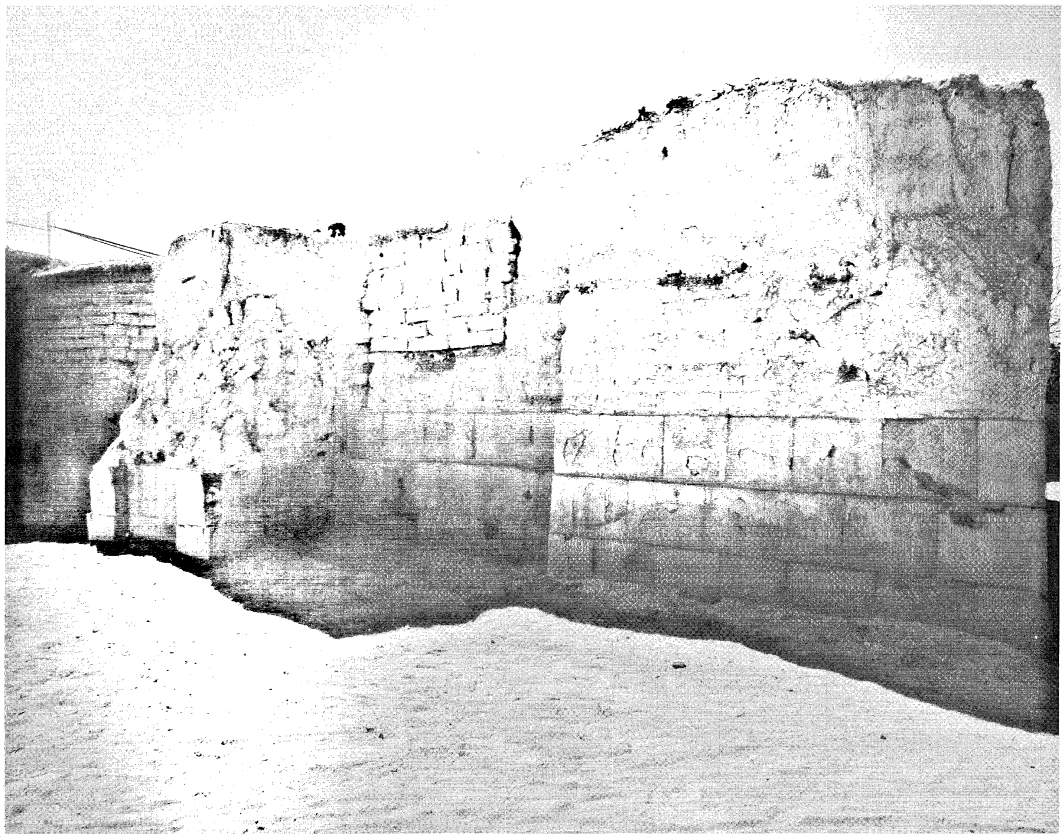


Fig. 20.13. Pier attached to the north wall of the Ayanis temple.

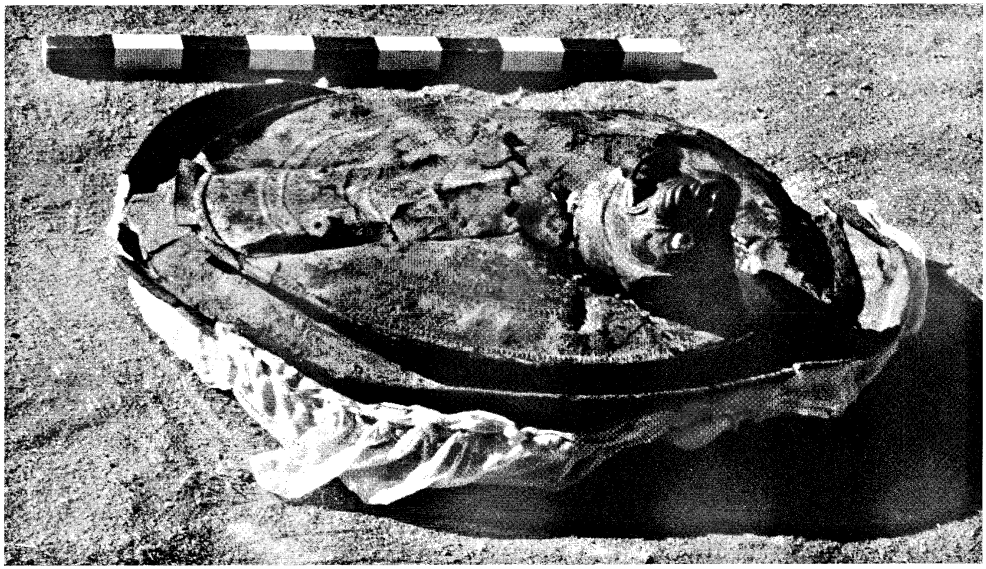


Fig. 20.14. Lion headed bronze inscribed shield from Ayanis.

Fig. 20.15. Courtyard and piers of the Ayanis temple.

Fig. 20.16. Bronze cauldron in the courtyard of the Ayanis temple.

As the Ayanis temple was uncovered, many architectural characteristics that are similar to the Musasir temple were exposed. The decorative elements of the Musasir temple and one of the cauldrons found in Ayanis temple area emphasize these similarities (Fig. 20.16). When the heights of the guards in front of the Musasir temple are taken into consideration, the height of the temple seems to measure 10-12 m including the platform on which the temple stood, the temple walls, the roof and the spear-like finial. It should be remembered that as the slab on which the relief was carved is short, the temple may have been depicted lower than it was in reality.

The Ayanis core temple is built in a temple area with side walls still preserved to a height of 5.0 m. A roof supported on ten piers covered the perimeter of the temple area, leaving open a central courtyard in front of the core temple. The section of the building supported by the piers except for was two-storeyed and some precious gold artifacts had fallen from the upper storey to the floor in the courtyard. The height of the two-storeyed construction including the roof could not have been higher than 15 m. If the core temple had been a higher than the surrounding construction and approaching a height of 15 m, there would have been problems in fixing the roof or in clearing the snow from the roof. It is proposed that the stone wall built on the front side of Kayalıdere temple (Fig. 20.02) served as a pedestal for a ladder which was used to reach the roof (Burney 1966: 73). Such a ladder made of stone and wood could hardly have reached the roof of a very high tower-type construction. It is, therefore, almost inevitable that the height of the core temple was much lower. In the light of the information obtained from Ayanis and other Urartian sites, it does not seem possible to describe Urartian temples as tower-like temples 26 m high. As we see it, Urartian temples were probably c. 15 m high

including the low pyramidal roofs. There are no window openings on the temple walls. Light could only pass in the inner room through the doorway. We have limited information about how the roof was covered. In the excavations at Ayanis and other fortresses, no data about the roof covering was obtained. It can be assumed that the roof of the Ayanis temple and generally those of all Urartian temples were pyramidal (Erzen 1962: 404; Kleiss 1963-1964: 13-14) (Colour plate Va). In a period in which there were no pottery roof tiles, the roof was probably covered by compacted clay or by wooden shingles (wood tile). It should be emphasized that pyramidal roofs covered with mud plaster are still used in the region.

The religious ceremonies that took place in Urartian temples

We have very limited information about the specifics of ceremonies at temples from previous excavations, but artefacts, systematic excavations, and careful observations from Ayanis have given us abundant and reliable information on this subject. It is archaeologically certain that some magnificent buildings around the temple area were used in conjunction with the temple, perhaps by the priests performing the religious activities of the temple.

The buildings surrounding the temples and the functions of these buildings as well as the ceremonies held within temple area can now be clearly interpreted. The storage facilities unearthed at Ayanis, which contained religious objects controlled by priests, and the existence of the monumental buildings attached to the temple, which were reserved for priests' accommodation, are clear indications of the fact that the religious class was more influential within the Urartian governing élite than had previously been thought (Çilingiroğlu 2007: 41-46).

To carry out religious ceremonies, the priests and the other personnel involved entered the temple area through a door in the north-east and could have purified themselves using the water in a large basin. Near the north wall of the temple area was a pithos, inscribed with hieroglyphs which held wine to be presented as libation to the gods.[3]

Many weapons found in the temple area were either on the floor or were hanging on the piers or on the exterior walls of the temple (Çilingiroğlu 2001b; Derin & Çilingiroğlu 2001). It is hard to believe that the shields on the walls of Ayanis which on the basis of other inscribed shields we can assume to have been dedicated to the God Haldi, were only elements of decoration. Weapons were important elements of a religious ceremony and they were kept for some time in the house of the god to whom they were offered. The number of weapons dedicated in the temple was so great that some were moved to the depots in the temple area and stored there. The weapons were Haldi's holy belongings and were not used in daily life. These weapons are sacred possessions. This might be the reason for the 13th line of the Meherkapı inscription that recorded the sacrifices that were prescribed for the 'Weapons of Haldi'.

Some of the weapons found in Ayanis fortress were filled with millet grain. Especially in quivers, cauldrons, jars and in objects made of bones a great amount of millet was found. A bronze cauldron, 1.05 m in diameter and with two handles, was found in the storage room at the south-west corner of the temple area is and was completely full of millet. Millet was also found in the jars placed behind the cauldron (Fig. 20.17). It seems possible that the millet found in the jars was stored for use in the religious ceremonies.

The inscriptions on quivers filled with millet recorded that they were presented to Haldi (Derin & Çilingiroğlu 2001: 159 n. 26). It is hard to determine the religious belief that led the Urartians to fill the quivers dedicated to Haldi with millet. Millets have sprays of numerous seeds. With such a look, the plant may well have represented fertility.

A shield unique to Urartian art was found near the pier that was attached to the north wall of the Ayanis core temple. A lion head (Colour plate IVc) weighing 1.5 kg was applied to the centre of the shield which has a diameter of 1.04 m (Fig. 20.14). There are sequences of lion and bull images on the shield and two lines of

[3] Jars, in which the wine offered to Haldi was stored, were also found in Musasir (LAR II 173, Luckenbill 1926-27).

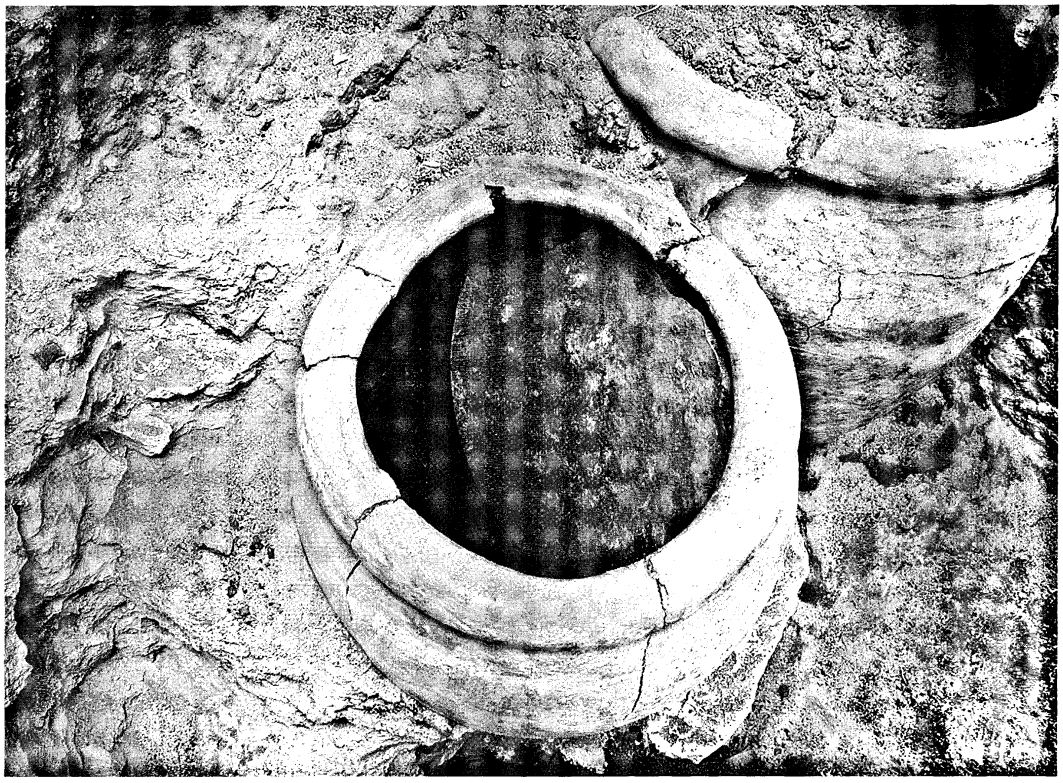


Fig. 20.17. Millet jars in the courtyard of the Ayanis temple.

cuneiform were incised on one side of the shield. Although the text on the shield with a lion head has similarities to the texts on other devotional weapons, there is one significant difference:

The second line of the inscription (Salvini 2001c: 272) reads:

> Rusa says: he who takes this shield, he who throws(?) it, he who [...] waters, he who th[rows] earths on fires on earths, he who effaces my name and puts his name, may God Haldi destroy him, his seed and the seed of his seed under the Sun(light).

One might assume that the fire mentioned in the inscription should be next to the shield, and it may be no coincidence that a hearth was placed in the corner where the temple wall and the pier attached to the temple meet. Scorch marks on the temple walls prove that a fire had been lit in the hearth. The shield with a lion head hung on the temple wall above the hearth and the curse in the inscription forbidding the extinguishing of the fire seems significant. Fire represents the continuity of the hearth and therefore of the house (here maybe the whole fortified citadel). Maybe the fire referred to in the inscriptions was an eternal fire preserved by Haldi's warrior power. These findings suggest that a fire cult was part of the Urartian religious practices.

There is a second hearth next to the south wall of Ayanis temple. It is semicircular and made of mud-brick (Fig. 20.18). On the west side of the hearth there are three small size storage jars. The grain in the jars near the hearth was definitely not for cooking. The hearth and the jars next to the temple wall must have been used in a religious ceremony. The water basin and the wine pithos near the east door, which was the entrance to the temple area, were used for liquid libations. Most probably the grain in the jars near the hearth was used for scattering (dry libation).

Fig. 20.18. Hearth next to the south wall of the temple in Ayanis.

There is not much evidence of cooking a holy meal in the hearth. There are, however, numerous animal bones found in different spots in the temple area. Most of these bones belong to cattle and wild sheep. It should also be remembered that the sacrifice of a living animal was a part of the ceremonies held in the temple area. In the temple area, there was no fixed altar on which sacrifices were made. A broken altar found in the storage rooms was most probably taken from the temple area. It is likely that the sacrificial animals were slaughtered on portable altars. It is possible that parts of the sacrificed animals were cooked and distributed to certain people. It is emphasized in Urartian inscriptions that during the ceremonies the liver of the sacrificial animal should be reserved for the king (D'jakonov 1991: 16). The cooking was most probably done in the holy hearths at both sides of the temple.

Religious ceremonies and the materials used for these ceremonies allow us understand Urartian religion in further details (Çilingiroğlu 2005: 31-37). The results of the Ayanis excavations have given us considerable information about the reconstruction and religious activities of the Urartian temple. This valuable knowledge can widen our understanding of Urartian religion and of the function of the temples.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Modern works are cited by author and date according to the Harvard system. Internet sources are referred to either by the author's surname and the year consulted or, if the author's name is not known, the website and year consulted (e.g. de.wikipedia.org 2007). The editors have not sought to impose on the authors a single format for citing ancient texts, but have accepted the preferences of the contributors.

Abbreviations

AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AHw	W. von Soden 1965-1981. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden
AMI	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*
AMIT	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan*
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
CAD	A.L. Oppenheim & E. Reiner (eds.) 1956-. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago-Glückstadt
CTN 5	H.W.F. Saggs 2001. *The Nimrud Letters, 1952*, Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud V, British School of Archaeology in Iraq, London
CTU	M. Salvini 2008. *Corpus dei testi urartei* Vols. 1-3. *Le iscrizioni su pietra e roccia*, Documenta Asiana 8, Rome
HchI	F.W. König 1955-1957. *Handbuch der chaldischen Inschriften*, AfO Beiheft 8, Graz
IFŽ	*Istoriko-filologičeskij Žurnal [Historical-Philological Journal] Patma-Banasirakan Handes*, Yerevan
I.N.	*Ivories from Nimrud*
IstMitt	*Istanbuler Mitteilungen*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
PNA	*The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAA 1	S. Parpola 1987. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West*, SAA 1, Helsinki
SAA 4	I. Starr 1990. *Queries to the Sun God: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*, SAA 4, Helsinki
SAA 5	G.B. Lanfranchi & S. Parpola 1990. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II. Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*, SAA 5, Helsinki
SAA 7	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1992. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration*, SAA 7, Helsinki
SAA 11	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1995. *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration*, SAA 11, Helsinki
SAA 15	A. Fuchs & S. Parpola 2001. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III. Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*, SAA 15, Helsinki
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